

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON OPERATION OF HOPPER DREDGES
IN THE BRAZOS ISLAND HARBOR PROJECT

DECEMBER 2002

On December 13, 2002 the contract hopper dredge *B.E. Lindholm* began work on the Entrance Channel of the Brazos Island Harbor Project. This was a continuation of the dredging job that was suspended in March 2002, due to green turtle takes at this project and at the Port Mansfield Channel. Contract specifications required dredging an estimated 257,000 cubic yards (CY) of shoal material. The required depth of dredging was 41 to 43 feet below Mean Low Tide (MLT, Corps of Engineers Datum), with 2 feet of allowable overdepth dredging.

Dredging began on December 13, 2002, and was terminated on December 19, 2002. A total of 60 loads of dredged material were collected and deposited into Placement Area No. 1-A. Dredging was performed between Stations -6+000 and -12+500. A total of 121,549 CY of material were excavated from this project.

The dredge was equipped with rigid draghead turtle deflectors, and 100% inflow screening with a 4-inch square mesh. NMFS-approved turtle observers provided 24-hour/day monitoring of dragheads and screens for each load cycle. The observers were employed by REMSA, Inc. under a subcontract to the dredging contractor, Weeks Marine, Inc.

Relocation trawling was conducted on a 24-hour daily basis during dredging operations. A total of one loggerhead and 5 greens were captured, tagged and relocated safely. Additionally, one Kemp's ridley was captured, but escaped before being tagged. A copy of the trawling final report is enclosed.

During the performance of this dredging, two green sea turtle takes were documented. The first take occurred on December 15th and 16th in loads No. 26 and 29. The observers determined that parts of the same turtle were entrained in these two loads. The second take occurred on December 19th in load No. 59. The water temperature during these takes was about 17°C. A copy of the observer reports is enclosed.

Dredging was again suspended prior to completion of work, due to green turtle takes.